DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 166 128 SP 013 145

AUTHOR Shanker, Albert
TITLE The State of Our Union.
PUB DATE Aug 78
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Federation of Teachers (62nd, Washington, D.C., August 21, 1978)
AVAILABLE FROM American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, 11 Dupont Circle NW, Washington, D.C. 20036

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Civil Rights; Collective Bargaining; *Educational Finance; *Educational Legislation; Federal Aid; Finance Reform; *Government Role; *Labor Unions; *Political Power; Tax Allocation; Teacher Associations; Teacher Militancy; Teacher Retirement

ABSTRACT

The following topics of immediate concern to the American Federation of Teachers are discussed in terms of their current status and future plans for action: (1) federal aid to education; (2) bilingual education; (3) pensions, benefits, and retirement; (4) effective lobbying; (5) civil rights; (6) collective bargaining and union membership; (7) Proposition 13 and its impact; (8) labor law reform; and (9) tuition tax credits. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED166128

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marilyn Rauth

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ADDRESS BY ALBERT SHANKER

"THE STATE OF OUR UNION"

[Edited from the transcription of the opening session of the Convention, August 21, 1978.]

Each year at this time, as president of the American Federation of Teachers, I have the opportunity and the obligation to address you on the problems before the Union, on our accomplishments, to discuss where we have been and where we are about to go.

And over these years, just the years that I have been attending Conventions of the AFT, all of us have seen great changes. In the last year or two, we perhaps have seen the greatest change of all, and that is a shifting of major problems from the local stage and the stage at the state level to right here in Washington, D.C.

It's fair to say that if we were to interview and poll all of our members across the country and get some kind of an anecdotal record of the time and the circumstance under which they affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, we would put together a pretty big book. Almost universally we would find that the teachers would say: "Well, the salaries were no good in my school district." Or, "I had an argument with the principal and he gave me a rough time, and the people who were supportive in the school were the union members and they helped me with the legal case or with the grievance."

There would be some story which touched the life of the teacher within a school or within a school district. Or it may be that a handful of those teachers would say, "I joined the union because of the magnificent struggle for a better pension system in the state legislature."

I think it is very clear that up until this period of time there are very, very few teachers in the country -- our members or members of any other national organization -- who would have given as their main reason for joining the union the struggles that were taking place at the national level on behalf of teachers.

Oh, yes, there were national organizations, and those national organizations were needed in times of emergency, to give help in organizing, to give assistance during strikes, to give help in collective bargaining elections. But the national organization was mostly an organization to help to service locals and state federations, since that's where the action was. And "was" is the wrong word. Because I do not mean to imply that there is no action at the local level. Certainly the teachers who are facing the possibility of long and tough strikes in places like Cleveland and Philadelphia, and negotiations still going on in Los Angeles and many other districts across the country, with a Proposition 13 and voucher item on the ballot in Michigan, know that the problems at the local and state levels have not disappeared.

But what has happened is that, for the first time, major national conflicts, which can result not merely in helping or hurting a little bit but can determine the entire future of public schools in this country, are being decided nationally.

I would like to touch on some of the issues, and then I would like to come to the major fights which we have confronted over the last year and which we continue to face.

Joe Califano talked about education funding. From the time the Republican Administration entered Washington until last year, we saw deterioration in the funding of education in this country. And now, for the first time, largely as a result of the political

SP013 145

efforts which we were part of, and also as a result of the consultations which we engaged in with the President of the United States, with the Commissioner of Education and the Secretary of HEW, we are about to take a giant step forward. Not only in money, but in philosophy as well. The money is going to go where it is most needed. And in addition to helping students in poverty, there will be concentrations for children in the very early grades, the first, second and third grades because we all know that if children learn how to read and to write and count in those grades, why, half the battle is over at that time.

There is also some money in there for parent education. Not to get parents into schools to take them over, not to get parents into schools to decide which teacher should be hired and which should be fired, but to educate parents how to help their own children in school, and to follow up on their school work.

And we have improved and modified the bilingual program. Yes, we've supported bilingual education. Just think of a little child coming from some other country, walking into a place where he can't possibly communicate with anyone else. Why, the entry of a child, a young child, into school is a tough experience, even without that language barrier.

But, unfortunately, in recent years bilingual education in many places has been subverted. The purpose of bilingual education is to take children who do not speak English, to make them feel at home and comfortable, to give them education in their own language for a short period of time, but the major purpose of bilingual education is to teach them to read and write and speak English as quickly as possible, because that is the language that they're going to have to work in for the rest of their lives.

Now, unfortunately, some groups saw the bilingual education money as an opportunity not to educate children but to create some sort of a supernationalist movement. Many of them felt it wasn't necessary to teach English at all, that they would merely teach in the original language. And many of them felt that it was unnecessary to maintain any educational standards in this field.

Well, we oppose those views. We favor bilingual education and we have succeeded in modifying the law so that these abuses will be greatly minimized.

We had some other fights recently at the national level, and many of us were involved. There was an effort to mandate that all public employees, including all teachers, be put under Social Security. Now, Social Security is a great thing. The labor movement, teacher unions, have always supported it, and we certainly are not opposed to it. But we find in many states that teachers have pension systems which guarantee them a certain pension, and the laws in those states indicate that if they are covered by Social Security, they will be compelled to pay a Social Security tax and they will reap no benefit--because the pension systems in their states require that whatever they get from Social Security be subtracted from the pension which they already have.

So that we have thousands upon thousands of teachers who will be paying taxes of 6, 7, 8, 9 percent -- how high a percentage it will eventually end up being we don't know -- and we will never see any benefit from that money.

We were able to put together a coalition to prevent that from happening.

Then we had a congressional movement to remove the 65-year-old age limit. It's about time it was removed, although it doesn't

come at a very good time. It's kind of difficult to say to people when they are 65 that they can work longer at the very time when there are millions of young people waiting to take their jobs.

But, nevertheless, the Congress decided that this was the time to move. And in the very first introduction of that legislation, there were certain exemptions: they wanted to say that everybody else in this country could work until 70, but not teachers and college professors.

Well, we got teachers put in very quickly, but we had a long fight to make sure that the only people in this country who didn't remain outside of the law's provisions and discriminated against were those in higher education. We were practically the only ones in that fight, but I'm happy to say we were able to modify it, and our good friends in higher education will receive the same protection that everybody else will.

We have conducted a fight on the education department, and right now it looks as though it may very well have come out too late, and may be bottled up in this session. And I think that all of us ought to be clear on what that issue is. Yes, we think that education should have more prestige, and we think that there should be more money in it, and we think it should be reorganized. And we don't think that the way it's being handled and organized in the federal government at the present time is adequate. We think that many of the criticisms of the current organization are very valid. But we do not favor taking education out and making a separate department, for one simple reason: in order to affect Washington, you need power. The more people you've got holding your hand and marching and going down together and writing letters together, the more power you have.

Right now we are together with all of the people who are interested in health, in Social Security, in welfare, in education, in labor, and in every single one of these areas, all of them concentrate all of their lobbying on one particular department: HEW.

You break that up and create a separate education department, and the people who are interested in health and Social Security and welfare are going to concentrate their efforts on one department, and the education people are going to be left smaller and weaker and alone, taking care of problems in education. And I say to you that I am not willing to trade the tremendous power that we have at the present time for a little bit of snobbish appeal in being able to say that "We've got our own separate department."

Many of us have had problems in the last few years with the Office for Civil Rights. And the problems have been rather interesting. Chicago last year, and even at this very moment, Philadelphia, Cleveland, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco. You know, the Office for Civil Rights comes in and finds that a school district is guilty of discrimination or guilty of some improper practices, and very frequently the school administration sits down with the Office for Civil Rights and the very first thing that they offer to sacrifice to the federal government is our contracts.

Somehow, the only way you seem to be able to achieve civil rights in this country is to take union contracts and tear them apart. Well, we're for civil rights, and we're for civil rights enforcement. But we also believe that it's the obligation of the Office for Civil Rights not just to meet with the superintendent of schools, but to meet with our teachers' unions and see how we can get civil rights enforced without destroying the civil rights

of teachers.

Now, we had a dramatic show of how important and how crucial the federal government is in the experiences which New York City went through in the last three years. You will all remember that three years ago New York City was on the verge of bankruptcy, and if it were not for the teachers and their pension investments, New York City would have gone down, New York State would have gone down, and there would have been major financial disruptions, not only in the United States but, according to the Chancellor of West Germany, most of the economies of Western democratic countries would have suffered irreparable harm.

We went through three very tough years, and there wasn't anything there that could be done or negotiated locally that would help the situation.

Finally, we were able to bring back laid-off teachers, to win salary increases. But the negotiations did not take place merely at the local level. The reason that New York City was able to bounce back was not only because the federal government finally granted billions of dollars in loans, but the federal government told the Mayor of the City of New York: We will not pass on these loans to New York City until you have concluded your contract with your municipal employees.

And so even in the negotiations at the local level, the key point was right here in Washington.

Now, within the courts, a number of important cases which also affect every one of us I have reported to you frequently and previously. But a decision that came down a little more than a year ago continues to dominate our lives in many ways. The Supreme Court ruled, in the League of Cities case, that it was a states' rights type of issue; by a vote of 5 to 4, the Supreme Court ruled that the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act did not apply to school districts or to states or to municipalities or county governments.

Now, immediately that meant that these districts didn't have to comply with minimum wage and other such regulations. But the damage has been much greater. At the time when Jimmy Carter was taking office, President Carter had pledged himself to the enactment and support of a Federal collective bargaining bill. He even sent a message to the New Jersey State School Boards Association saying that he favored the right of teachers to strike. And the leading committees in Congress were prepared to move legislation.

But as soon as the League of Cities case came down, almost all of our friends in Congress said: What's the point of making enemies with the general public? What's the point of passing federal collective bargaining legislation, when the chances now are very good that if this goes to the Supreme Court, it's going to be found unconstitutional anyway?

And now we have other cases, of course, of major interest. One of them decided this year was the Bakke case, and I think all of us can be very proud and very happy that the Supreme Court found a way of doing exactly what we, and what many others, said in our briefs before the Court.

The Supreme Court found a way of seeing to it that we continue programs of affirmative action which we believe in, and at the same time it rejected the concept of quotas, very much along the line of the proposals that we made to the Court.

Now, there are two major cases before the U. S. Supreme Court which all of us have an important stake in. One of them deals with the right of parochial school teachers to be covered under the labor

relations laws of this country. That case is now on its way to the United States Supreme Court.

The Catholic Church and a number of dioceses have taken the position that if the Labor Relations Board covers employees in parochial schools, that would mean that the United States Goverment would be interfering in the internal affairs of a religious institution. And if the Supreme Court should agree with that, it would mean that literally hundreds of thousands of employees, working in institutions -- perhaps this will eventually apply to hospitals and other institutions as well -- will have no rights of bargaining whatsoever.

The American Federation of Teachers is taking the lead in that case, and we hope that within a very short period of time the Courts will speak very clearly, and they will say that while the government will not interfere in anything that has anything to do with religion, everyone who works for an employer, whether that employer is a church or some other private employer, ought to be treated with decency as an employee and has the same rights of collective bargaining that all other workers have.

Another case is only a few weeks old. A federal circuit court reviewed an appeal by Yeshiva University in New York City. The employees in Yeshiva University formed an independent union, and they went to the National Labor Relations Board, asking for the recognition procedures, for an election to be held. Yeshiva University went to the courts with a new argument. They said: Our faculty members at our university have faculty conferences and participate in committees, and at these faculty conferences and committees we ask the advice of the faculty on curriculum, on promotion, on hiring, on firing, and really all of the teachers at our college and university are part of management, because we meet with them and they help us make all of these decisions, and therefore they are not really workers; every one of them is really the boss, and therefore they should not have the right to have collective bargaining.

Well, believe it or not, the court went for that. And therefore, until there is a review and reversal by the Supreme Court of the United States, the current decision stands, and the current decision rules that they are management people.

Now, I need not stay too long on the point that if that case should be lost, state legislatures around the country will turn around and say, "Well, our people in higher education in the public sector are also involved in faculty committees, and therefore their right to collective bargaining should be removed from the state labor relations legislation."

It's only one step further for public school systems to engage in some process of differentiated staffing. And pretty soon, each and every one of us is going to be the principal.

Now, they will call us in and they will ask us our opinion, and they will at the same time try to take away our collective bargaining rights. It's a major danger, and it is a case which we will be following and which we will participate in.

I now want to come to the three major issues, the fights that we have been involved it. And I'm not going to mention them in any order of preference, because, as will be clear when I have concluded, I think that they are all of equal importance, they are all linked together, and those who are on the other side on these issues are pretty such the same people using the same strategies and common pools of money.

The first of these that I'd like to talk about is Proposition 13. We know its effect. California this year is spared most of the effects, because they has a $5 billion surplus, and therefore, for this year, they will not feel the cuts as much as they would have if they had no money sitting there. And most of our states and lacalities do not have that surplus money.

Now, there's no question that Proposition 13 fever is spreading all across the country. It's on the ballot in a number of States. It's on, with the exact wording, in the State of Michigan. And the New York State Commissioner of Commerce has a version of his own. We would like a constitutional amendment which would set an absolute percentage limit to the number of public employees in the state, setting as 3 percent of the total population. And other States and other localities have different formulations.

I think that all of us ought to be very clear about why Proposition 13 is coming about. One reason, of course, is a strong resurgence of right-wing organizations in this country that have a lot of money and that are very effective, and I'll get back to that. But there is a basis for Proposition 13. Proposition 13 had very broad support, a lot of people who consider themselves liberals voted for Proposition 13. The pollsters say that 40 percent of the blacks in California voted for Proposition 13. The pollsters say that the majority of public employees in the state, whose jobs are on the line, voted for Proposition 13, even though it was against their own self-interest.

Well, I was out in California for that fight, and in talking to a number of people, they told stories like this: They said, "You know, I bought a house or a condominium four or five years ago for $50,000 or $60,000. Today that house or apartment is worth $175,000, after four years. And so, on my poor income, I'm no longer paying taxes on a $50,000 house, I'm now paying on a $175,000 house; and next year I'm going to be paying on a $200,000 house and the following year on a $250,000 house. And while eventually I'm going to pick up a lot of money, I can't afford to keep this house, and I can't afford to sell it, because there's nothing else I can buy except in that same price range. Nothing else is for sale."

Well, why is that?

It is very closely linked to what we have been talking about in the last few years here and at AFL-CIO Conventions. When the interest rates were tightened up, and when therefore people stopped building housing and new buildings--throwing millions of people out of work--at the same time millions of new people were coming into the market looking for housing. Since no houses were being built, these values skyrocketed, and one of the basic problems that we have in Proposition 13 is linked to the whole unemployment and the whole interest questions.

And the other part of it, of course, is the fact that we still have a very rotten, regressive tax system, so that it's gotten to the point that many people who shouldn't be paying taxes are paying them for those who should be, and this was their only way to rebel, and there's got to be something that we do about that.

And Mr. Jarvis announced that he and his friends--he did not say where the money was coming from, he was asked several times--he and his friends are coming up now with a national tax program, and you can be sure it's going to be something that's very simple and it's going to be very appealing. And Mr. Jarvis says he's just going to do one little thing with that tax program; they're going to go all across the country and they're going to ask everybody who is running for Congress, "Do you support this support this or don't you support it?"

And the people who say, "Yes, we support it," they are going to get lots of money to make sure they are elected; and the people who say, "No," they're going to move to defeat them. And we ought to take note of that.

Now, the second big fight that we had this year was on labor law reform. And it's very much the same fight. The same right-wing groups that have organized all across the country for Proposition 13 managed to defeat labor law reform this year by one vote. And I think all of us ought to be proud of the job that we did. I know that you sent postcards, and I know you called your senators, I know you called your congressmen, and we should not forget that we didn't lose this labor law reform fight on a basis of a fair

count. We had 57, 58, 59 votes to vote for labor law reform. What we couldn't get was the 60th vote to break an undemocratic filibuster, and it's about time that that rule was changed, so that a minority in the Senate cannot prevent the majority from getting a bill through.

Now, this defeat of this legislation will have a very great effect on all of us. First, you know that the bill was very simple. All it said was that constant lawbreakers, like J. P. Stevens, can't get away with it. They can't fire people for joining unions. They can't refuse to negotiate after the union has been elected. That they have got to negotiate fairly. They can't just close their plant and move out because a union has been elected.

That was very interesting. Each and every one of us, if we violate some little law, if we're out on strike for a couple of days, they find a way of punishing us very quickly, we go off to jail, we're fined, But you get a big outfit like J. P. Stevens that has violated the law of the land, that has been cited by the Supreme Court time and time again, no penalties whatsoever that mean anything, and that's what this law would have done.

Well, we don't have it. We missed on it this year. And that means that many workers in the South who needed this to organize will still be without a union. It means that those of our members here from the South, who were counting on people in the textile mills to join unions, and people in the new auto plants down there, workers who would have joined unions and who would have helped our teachers organize, it means that we're going to have a tougher time there.

It also means that those of us from the North, those of us from industrial centers and cities, we're going to be facing a much tougher time bargaining, because every time you sit down at the bargaining table to try to get a salary increase, try to keep up with the cost of living, what you're going to find is your school board, your mayor and your governor saying, "Look, if we give you more money, we're going to have to raise taxes; and if we raise taxes, the people who live here and the industries that are here are going to move down to these Southern states where they don't have any national labor relations law that's enforcible, where the local laws are a joke."

So every single one of us, wherever we are, will be very much affected by this.

Well, there will be another opportunity on that one next year.

The third one, of course, is tuition tax credits. And this was, without a doubt, the greatest national battle that we have ever fought as teachers.

There is no doubt in my mind that if tuition tax credit passes, it is the end of public education in this country as we know it. Yes, first, it will be the wealthiest children who will take it and move out; and the next year another group will move out. And each year there will be more and more.

When we're all finished, we will still have some children in the public schools. They will be the difficult to educate. They will be the ones who were not accepted by the private schools. They will be those who were accepted and then were kicked out. So there will always be a public

school system, but it will become sort of the "charity ward;" it will become the "clinic," it will become the "poor house" of education in the country. It will become a national scandal, as private schools flourish.

Now, the tax credit this year was only supposed to be $500. But we all know that that would have meant that next year they would have come back asking for $750, and the following year for $1,000, because once you accept the idea that the people, the taxpayers of the United States, have an obligation to pay for people's private schools, just because they are unhappy with the public schools that they have a right to use, once you say that the public has an obligation to pay for those private services, the next argument is that the amount you should pay should be exactly the same as what you pay for those using public schools. The argument for treating private schools equally would then be moved up, and within a very short period of time we would not have tuition tax credits, but we would have a complete voucher system.

Now, of course, the big argument that the other side used, and the Senators leading the fight, was: "We need pluralism in American society. It's no good for the public schools to have a lock, to have a monopoly. We all know that competition made this country great. Why, everybody will do better if you've got competing school systems, if you've got the private schools competing with the public schools, both sides will become better and better, because they will be competing for customers."

And a lot of people were sold on that. But nobody really asked the question: What kind of competition was about to take place; was it fair competition or unfair competition?

What kind of competition do you have between a public school system that has to live up to the civil rights laws of the land and provide for integration, and a private school system that doesn't have to integrate, that can reject anyone on the basis of religion, color, creed, race or nationality? What kind of competition do you have when the public schools are obligated to teach every single handicapped child in this country, and a private school can shut out every single handicapped individual?

What kind of competition do you have when the laws of our various states give collective bargaining rights to many of our teachers across the country, whereas, if the Supreme Court ruling goes against us on this parochial school decision, the private schools would not have to engage in any kind of labor relations practices or collective bargaining with their employees?

This is not competition. What they have done is to saddle the public schools with all kinds of obligations as to students' rights, as to suspension procedures, adversary procedures, civil rights procedures, and everything else, and after giving us all of these obligations, they then tell those parents who don't want integration, who don't want handicapped children in school, who don't want to have tough suspension procedures, they say, "Well, if you don't like it, we're going to give you $500 to get out of this very school, and the reason you don't like it is because of the obligations which we are forcing you to fulfill." Absolute insanity. And yet we came very, very close.

We are happy that we worked together in this, with a broad coalition--the civil rights movement in this country, the Congressional Black Caucus, the leadership of the parents' associations of the country, school board associations, administrator groups, the National Education Association. All of these groups worked to defeat this legislation.

Now we came very close to losing. We did lose in the House, and we made it in the Senate last week, but there is a very strange thing that is about to happen. Whereas the House passed tuition tax credits, those Representatives from the House who are going to go into the conference committee happen to be pretty much opposed to tuition tax credits. Whereas in the Senate, where we defeated it, the conference people favor tuition tax credits.

Ans so we're not exactly sure how that conference is going to come out, but we think that the result will be good, and of course we have every indication that the President would veto it if it got to his desk.

Now, we're not finished with this fight, because Senator Moynihan has announced that if tuition tax credits don't go through this year, it's going to become a presidential issue in 1980, and that they are going to continue fighting for tuition tax credits until they get them. And that raises some political issues for us, which I will get to in a moment.

But for all of these congressmen who voted to give $500--mostly for the children who are from the most affluent families, who are going to be sent off to private schools by adding a thousand or two thousand dollars of their own--I think that next year we ought to go to Congress with our own tuition tax proposals and say we want the Congress to show that they are going to give $500 for every single child in a public school to stay there rather than to get out.

They would probably find that that would be inflationary.

Now, I'd like to say a word about tuition tax credits in higher education. That has passed. And our major effort has been concentrated on elementary and secondary schools, because there it's a question of the life or death of the public schools in this country.

What I would like every delegate here to realize that tuition tax credits in higher education, while not life and death, are very, very bad public policy. They will hurt higher education and they will do great harm to those students who are most in need of financial assistance in going to college. And the reason is this: The tuition tax credit gives 500 bucks to everybody, regardless of income. That's it. You put that in, and the Congress will then start cutting down on all of the other existing and proposed programs.

Now, what we ought to know is this: If you give students in colleges a credit up to half of their tuition and the tuition is $1,000, they get $500. The first thing that will happen is that every public college in the country that now charges less than $1,000 tuition--those that charge $600, $700, $800-- will immediately raise its tuition to $1,000. And so, instead of lowering the cost of a college education, what you're doing is raising tuition.

Secondly, this program would be passed as a substitute for the President's program, and the President's program, which now includes youngsters from middle-class families as well, would give much larger sums of money to students who are in need.

So what we would be doing with tuition tax credits is that we would give $500 to the chap whose father earns $300,000 a year, and we'd give the same $500 to the student whose parents are on welfare. And we'd say, boy, isn't that simple and isn't that wonderful?

Well, the President has a much better scheme. You really don't have to give the fellow whose father makes $300, 000 the $500, and you really ought to give the follow whose parents are on welfare enough so that he can go to college and graduate, because he's certainly not going to do it on $500.

Now, I said that these three problems, tuition tax credits, Proposition 13, labor law reform, there's a certain linkage, and there is. Whenever I was on a plane coming into Washington, I was listening to conversations behind me and in front of me, to the left and to the right, and the planes in the last year were absolutely filled with corporation executives. Top people. Vice presidents. Heads of departments. All of them had their expenses paid to come to Washington, and there were thousands of them down here at any time. And they came down for a week or two. And they lobbied the Congress to death on the question of labor law reform, and many of them were there on tuition tax credits, too. Because, after all, once you dismantle the public school system, there won't be all this pressure on property taxes and so forth.

Well, many of you have been getting literature, from "Committees Against Forced Unionism," all these branches of the Right-to-Work Committee. I got on a lot of those mailing lists. I must get about ten of those letters a day telling me about union bossism. They are all individualized letters. I mean, one of them started, "Dear Mr. Shanker: Do you know that union bosses like Shanker and Wurf could shut this country down?" They ought to work the computer out so it doesn't make that little mistake.

Well, we've got problems. What do we do?

In the first place, we must continue to educate our own membership about the reason that this is happening. It's happening, first of all, because there is now superior political organization on the part of right-wing groups in this country and on the part of industry. And, secondly, this is happening because of continued unemployment, continued joblessness, and therefore continued problems with inflation, and until we adopt many of the programs that we've been recommending, which will put us back into full employment, we're going to continue with these problems.

Well, how do we do it?

We do it in the same way that the corporations are doing it. We do it by improving our political action. We would not have stood a chance against tuition tax credits if we hadn't started our COPE program a couple of years ago, and if you and your locals and state federations hadn't gotten into the campaign. There were dozens of these people who would not have listened to you if it were not for the work that you and all of us have done over the last couple of years.

Now, at this Convention, we're going to have one very important decision to make among others. And I would like to talk about that for a minute or two.

You know, year after year we have problems, people vote against us on one bill or on another bill, to the point that we're unhappy with them. And so there will be some delegate who comes in and says, "Senator So-and-so voted against us on this, let's go out and get him."

And usually we stand up and say, "Look, none of these politicians is perfect. Sometimes they make a mistake. You can't be a one-issue person. You can't go after somebody; nobody has got a perfect record. They may have 90 percent, 95, 85 percent; you've got to be reasonable about this. Because you're likely to get somebody else who is an awful lot worse."

But, you, know, what do you do about something like tuition tax credits? Tuition tax credits is not just another bill, it's not one of those things where, if it doesn't pass, that's good, and if it does, well, we don't like it. It's not like another $500 million won or lost. Tuition tax credits is the whole ballgame, it's the whole existence of public education in this country, it's the existence of the union, it's the existence of equal opportunity. Do you just count that as one of the pieces of legislation in a long list?

Well, we've got to decide, and there will be many differences among us. Some locals have already endorsed

candidates running for Congress who voted for tuition tax credits. Because they believe that their record in other respects is an excellent one, and that the alternative choice is worse. And they believe that very strongly.

There are others who believe very strongly that when somebody tries to kill you, the only sensible thing you can do is respond in kind.

There will be an opportunity, in our discussion of tuition tax credits and political campaigns during this Convention, to adopt a policy which we will recommend to all of our locals and state federations.

Now, there's something else that this points up. More and more our problems are national, and our problems are political. I get more calls from local presidents wanting me to contact HEW, contact the Office for Civil Rights, reach the following senator or representative, maybe he can be helpful in this dispute with the Board of Education or on a strike.

And the only way in which we're going to succeed in defeating the Proposition 13's, in getting labor law reforms through, in permanently defeating tuiting tax credits and vouchers, is to continue making our organization more and more powerful, more and more members within our organization, so that political figures know that when they do something that hurst us or that's a question to the life or death of public schools, they have a huge group of politically active and sophisticated people who are going to be working against them.

And so, a few months ago, the Executive Council engaged in a lengthy analysis of our organizing prospects, and we find that there are hundreds of thousands of teachers, some of they in districts we've already organized, some of them in younger locals, many of them in higher education, many of them professionals working in hospitals or working for state or local agencies as lawyers or librarians. And we felt that unless we made an investment and took a chance at this time, and employed additional organizers and got some money together so that if, in your state, you've got a good opportunity and you call the AFT and "Look, we've got a good chance of doing something here, but we don't have the wherewithal, we need your help, we won't be sitting here in Washington saying, "Sorry, we don't have it.:

And so we have just adopted a budjet which is in deficit; we are budgeting a deficit of approximately $1 million for this coming year. We expect that part of it, part of that deficit will be made up by the fact that with more staff and more money and more programs, we will be organizing more members, and therefore we will have a greater income. But all of us know that organizing is not something that pays off in five minutes or in one day or in one month. Just think of how long it took your local to get established, and how long it took to get collective bargaining, and how long it took to build a majority. It takes quite a long time.

And so we will probably be coming back here next year, and I wish to put everyone on notice, that in terms of our problems, in terms of our prospects and also in terms of our competition we may have to consider a dues increase. The NEA did enact a substantial dues increase this year, and while it's a terrible shame that when both organizations are facing live-and-death issues across the country, we still have not found a way of unifying and of getting together and using our resources for the same common purpose, rather than against each other, that is nevertheless a fact. It takes two to make a merger, and at this point, they are not willing. And as long as they put more and more money into campaigns against us, and we will surely not win unles our resources are comparable.

And therefore, next year we expect that we will be back here and one of the items on our agenda will be a consideration for a increase in our per capita. And we will be communicating with all of you during the year.

The alternative is not to move into those areas where we have great opportunities.

Now, look around this hall. Many of us are from locals that were very small locals five years ago, and ten and fifteen years ago, twenty years ago, very small and struggling. Most of us at one time or another believed that we have joined an organization which was a permanent minority. We belong to the union, and we joined at a time when it was dangerour, and at a time when it was very unpopular. We joined at a time when we were sure that maybe we could have advanced and been promoted in the school system, but joining the union would probably mean that whatever opportunities we had in that direction were considerably reduced if not completely killed.

And at some time in the life of each and every one of us -- I know it was true for us in New York City, which I remind you was a small local in 1960 and '61 and '62 -- in the life and each and every one of us, there was some time when there was an opportunity to organize all of the teachers where we were, to stop being a minority, to engage in collective bargaining. And there are very few of us who did it by ourselves. New York City didn't do it by ourselves -- I remember a convention of the AFT much smaller than this, where the big debate was: Should be lend New York City $50,000? And it was quite a debate. Both the Council and the Convention. And that investment turned out to be a very good one. And there was help from locals across the country.

Well, I think that all of us who come from large locals and successful states should realize that sitting in this room are people who are in locals today that are just like the locals that we were part of ten and fifteen years ago. They are very courageous. They are in parts of the country where it's not very popular to be in the union. There are people sitting in this rrom who have lost their jobs as a result of union activity, and who are waiting to get their jobs back, to rebuild their unions, to make them greater. They are here, many of them at their own expense.

I believe and the Executive Council believes that those of us in locals and state federations that have made it just have to think back a very short period of time, think back to the time when we had to rely on those who had made it and those who were successful, and I am sure that when next year comes, and we have to pay for the programs that are going to help our brothers and sisters who are just beginning to build, to help them reach the same success that the rest of us have achieved, that we're going to come back next year and we're going to approve whatever it takes to give them the help and to build the unions that they need in their areas and in their parts of the country.

I want to thank all of you for your support, support of the AFT in recent years. They have been very tough years. The strikes have been rough. The layoffs. They have not been pleasant years, except that one develops a certain fox-hole type of mentality, and even when things are going rough, you can appreciate and enjoy the friends that you have and the support that you get.

We all owe a great debt of gratitude to our staff, to presidents of our locals and our state federations.

And one thing emerges as a result of our tremendous struggles of the last two years, and I return to the remarks I made at the very beginning. Most teachers who join the union join because of some little or bit problem that they had in their own pocketbooks or in their own schools. But, you know, the people who founded this union were people who saw beyond that. They had a belief and a dream that some day teachers within our society would not just be fighting for a livelihood at the local level or handling a grievance, but that some day the teachers of this country would be organized and powerful enough to be able to influence national policy and national decisions, because, who knows better than the teachers of this country what's good for schools?

And in the fight that we conducted on tuition tax credits, teachers for the first time in this country, teachers who joined the union to accomplish something within their own schools, rose to something much greater than their own schools or their school districts or their States. They have saved public schools and public education in this country, and we can be proud of the fight that we had.